



## WELCOME TO THE BIRD-A-THON!

**So, you have decided to participate in the Nevada Bird-a-thon. Now what?!** Now, go find birds! Sort of... it's almost that simple! This is a fundraising event with a competitive birdwatching aspect, but don't let it get to your head. At the end of the day, we are all in it to raise conservation dollars for Pinyon Jays! The most important part of the Bird-a-thon is to have fun. Please review the official birding rules, prize categories, and fundraising tips in this welcome packet before starting your Bird-a-thon.

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### What is a Bird-a-thon and how does it work?

A Bird-a-thon is a collaborative fundraising event, structured like a Walk-a-thon fundraiser. Your goal is to raise funds based on the number of bird species you will see. You may participate as a Backyard Birder or as a Big Day Birder. If you choose to be a Backyard Birder, you will keep a yard bird list for the entire 15-day duration of the event. If you choose to participate as a Big Day Birder, you will choose a 24-hour period, i.e. 12 am-12 am or 3 pm-3 pm etc. to tally as many species of bird as possible, spending as much or as little time birding as you like. Once you have decided on your strategy, your goal is to raise as many funds as you can in support of Great Basin Bird Observatory's Pinyon Jay conservation and community science initiatives. These funds have helped develop the [Pinyon Jay Community Science hub](#). New for the 2023 Bird-a-thon, GBBO will be giving a prize to the birder who submits the most forms using the [Survey1,2,3 form](#)!

Once you have completed your Bird-a-thon, we would love it if you wanted to write a trip report or share photos, and send to [outreach@gbbo.org](mailto:outreach@gbbo.org) or to our physical address listed below. Anecdotes from these will be included in the next GBBO newsletter. If you have any questions, please reach out to us at [outreach@gbbo.org](mailto:outreach@gbbo.org). Good luck, stay safe, and have fun!

**Great Basin Bird Observatory**  
**Attn: Bird-a-thon**  
**1755 E. Plumb lane, Ste 256a**  
**Reno, NV 89502**





## BIRD-A-THON FUNDRAISING

Asking people for money can seem daunting, but once you get started, it's not all that hard. Here are tips on how to make YOUR Bird-a-thon fundraising easy.

When you sign up for the Bird-a-thon, you will create an account on JustGiving.com and then connect a page with your team's bio to the Nevada Bird-a-thon Campaign. GBBO has created the Bird-a-thon event and campaign, which all teams will be connected to, AS LONG AS THEY ARE CREATED USING THE FOLLOWING LINK. All you have to do is create your account and your team's page using this URL. Simply click the orange "Start Fundraising" button the left hand side of the page, to start creating your account and team's page. Don't forget to edit your story, cover photo, and fundraising goals! This allows people to donate directly to your team, while contributing to the overall Bird-a-thon campaign. Directing friends and family to this webpage is the easiest way to solicit donations, but remember to direct them to donate specifically to your team! Reach out to outreach@gbbo.org with any questions! The website is fairly intuitive, but we have outlined specific instructions here to guide you:

1. Navigate to <https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/NevadaBirdathon2023>.
2. Click the orange "Start Fundraising" button on the right hand side of the page.
3. You must have a JustGiving.com account to participate. If you do not have one, you will be prompted to create one. It is free and simple.
4. If you do have a JustGiving.com account, you can connect it to the Nevada Bird-a-thon campaign.
5. Click the create a team button, and follow the system's prompts to complete the set up.
6. Don't forget to upload your cover photo, team story, and fundraising goals. In this process you create a unique URL for your team page, directing people to this URL will be the easiest way to collect donations.
7. The person that creates the team is the "Team Captain" and has access to edit content on the team page.
8. Once you create your team, others can join. JustGiving allows as many people, but per the Bird-a-thon rules, only 5 people may be on a team.
9. Also, per Bird-a-thon rules you may participate on up to two teams, BUT ONLY IF they are in separate prize categories.
10. Once you successfully create your team, your name will be displayed under the fundraisers section of the webpage, and your team will also be listed below. People can donate through either option.



11. Team members can join your team, and can customize their own individual pages.
12. If you wish to join a team, you MUST HAVE permission from the team captain.
13. In order to join a team, simply select the team from the right hand side of the Nevada Bird-a-thon JustGiving page:  
<https://www.justgiving.com/campaign/NevadaBirdathon2023>
14. Scroll down and select the large red "Join the Team" button in the center of the page.
15. You will be prompted to create a JustGiving.com account, or connect an existing account.
16. Once you have successfully joined a team your name will be listed on the team's page.
17. Success! If you have any issues please let us know: [outreach@gbbo.org](mailto:outreach@gbbo.org) or [bohman@gbbo.org](mailto:bohman@gbbo.org).

Additionally, you can collect pledges, in the typical *"Insert-you-event-here-A-thon"* style. For this purpose, we have also included a pledge sheet with your welcome materials. If you are soliciting and collecting pledges, you will be responsible for making arrangements with your pledge donors to write a check for the full amount upon completion of the Bird-a-thon. These checks should include your team name on the byline and can be postmarked, no later than 5/31/2023 to:

**Great Basin Bird  
Observatory Attn: Bird-a-  
thon  
1755 E. Plumb lane, ste  
256a Reno, NV 89502**

What to do:

1. Make a list of everyone you know: Neighbors, friends near and far, co-workers, old college roommates, cousins, grandparents, other parents in your child's preschool....
2. Cast a wide net. Not everyone will give. But the more people you ask, the more "yesses" you'll get.
3. Think of people whose causes you've supported. Did you sponsor them in their charity bike ride last year or donate to their food drive? These folks are more likely to sponsor you in the Bird-a-thon.
4. Don't feel embarrassed. Most people will respect you for caring enough about birds and wildlife conservation to put your time and effort into the Bird-a-thon.
5. Approach people! Send them a personal email with a link to your team's page on the JustGiving campaign website. Call them up. Write them a personal note. Personal calls, notes, emails,
6. and conversations are much more likely to get a response than a mass posting on



Facebook. (Your friends are welcome to mail a check to GBBO if they prefer, rather than donate online, just be sure they include your team name in the byline!)

7. Develop talking points (see below)—one or two reasons why GBBO, Pinyon Jays, and habitat conservation are important to you. Do you want your grandchildren to be able to see and enjoy Pinyon Jays and Brewer's Sparrows when they grow up??
8. Give them the donation link for your team. If you want their donation to be credited to your team for the fundraising competition, they need to donate specifically to your team either through your team's page or with a check specifically referencing your team's name. You can find links to all the team pages [HERE](#): scroll down to your team and give them the link for that page.
9. Remember you can ask for a per-species pledge! For instance, 25 cents or \$1 for every species spotted by your team. This will get them invested in the count, and also add to your competitive fun. Just keep in mind that afterwards, it will be your responsibility to let your donors know how many species you tallied and how much they should donate.
10. TALK ABOUT the Bird-a-thon. During your next family Zoom, on a walk to the water cooler, on social media.... Tell people how much you're looking forward to the Nevada Bird-a-thon, what species you hope to find, what team you hope to beat, etc.
11. Be open and sincere. If you let people know you have an ambitious fundraising goal, that you believe in, but you're nervous about how to reach it, some of them will step up to help. Wouldn't you do the same?
12. Be persistent. If someone doesn't respond to your first email, don't be discouraged, try again and say something like, "Hi, I just wanted to make sure my earlier note didn't get lost in cyberspace." People's inboxes get full, their lives are hectic, and they may have inadvertently overlooked your first request. It's worth trying again.
13. Thank your donors! Acknowledge their contribution as soon as you find out about it. Tell them you will let them know your success in the count and will send photos from count day. If they don't decide on the spot to support you, thank them for thinking about it.

Again, **TALK ABOUT** the Bird-a-thon. People will probably respond in kind to your enthusiasm for birds, nature, and Great Basin Bird Observatory. Tell the world. Who knows... you might inspire them not just to donate to the Bird-a-thon, but to try birding or come on a GBBO field trip for themselves.

## TALKING POINTS



Prepare ahead. Develop a script. Here are some points you can include, but the most important thing is to make it your own:

- GBBO is seriously invested in protecting Nevada's birdlife and needs your help. Direct potential donors to our website and talk about which projects we are doing that you are excited about. Each year, our surveyors are out there collecting data, but Nevada is a big place with a lot of ground to cover. Our Pinyon Jay Community Science project is a great example of what we can do with your help.
- GBBO has been researching and monitoring birds since 1997. It started with the first Nevada Breeding Bird Atlas, and our director's passion has kept the mission alive for the past 25 years.
- Climate change and ongoing loss of habitat are taking a toll on birds everywhere, especially in desert environments. For example, riparian habitat is very rare in the Great Basin, yet these habitats support a huge diversity of species; small impacts here affect large numbers of birds. A [2019 REPORT BY NATIONAL AUDUBON](#) predicted that 2/3 of North American bird species are at risk from climate change. We need organizations like GBBO to continue to be a strong voice for protecting birds and natural habitats and to have enough funds to carry out this mission for years to come.
- All funds raised by the Bird-a-thon go directly to Great Basin Bird Observatory with the express purpose of funding Pinyon Jay conservation work. The money stays right here in Nevada to help Pinyon Jays survive and thrive and to inspire and educate current and future generations about the wonders of our natural world. [LEARN MORE ABOUT PINYON JAY CONSERVATION IN THE GREAT BASIN](#). GBBO is a 501c3 non-profit so all donations are tax-deductible.





## BIRD-A-THON COMPETITION & PRIZE CATEGORIES

Participants can form a team of up to 5 members. In each category, birders will be eligible to compete for Most Species Seen and Most Funds Raised prizes. Each category will be assessed separately, including the subcategories of “Backyard” birding.

**Big Day Birder:** Form a team of up to 5 members or bird solo and record as many species as possible in NV by sight and sound within 24-hours. Big Day Birders are not limited to one location and can venture far and wide in search of species. The Big Day must take place in one 24-hour period i.e. 12 am-12 am, 3 pm-3 pm, etc. between May 5<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>.

**Green/Carbon Conscious Big Day Birder:** Typical Big Day rules (outlined above) apply, but you will be limited to public transportation, biking, and your own two feet to get around (anything other than personal/private vehicles)! Participants in this category will be limited to one 24-hour period to complete their Big Day but will be competing in a separate prize category than the traditional Big Day Birders.

**Backyard Birder:** “Yard Birds” are defined as any birds heard or seen from your yard i.e., you see a Mountain Chickadee at your feeder, a Turkey Vulture soaring overhead, and hear the distant call of a CA Quail. These all count as yard birds! If participating in a Backyard Birding category you can compile a list for the duration of the Bird-a-thon (May 5<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup>) and turn in your tally at the end. You are not confined to one 24-hour period. To make Backyard Birding accessible for all, we have created subcategories of “yards” and added an Adopt-a-Yard category.

- Suburban/Rural Yard: Houses with a front and/or back yard (side yards included). Yards might have grass, trees, bushes, gardens, patios, and decks. All birds seen and heard from your property count as “yard birds.”
- Apartment/Urban Yard: Go birding around your apartment complex/urban neighborhood. Count species seen from your yard, and apartment patio/balcony, and explore within a .5 mile radius of your home to build your list!
- Adopt-a-Yard: Pick a local park, nearby wildlife refuge, or stretch of the Truckee River (for example) to become your yard for the duration of the competition. Revisit the site as many times as you like between May 5<sup>th</sup>-15<sup>th</sup> and turn in your species list at the end.

**Community Scientist:** New in 2023, participants can compete in the community science category. There will be a prize for the birder that submits the most Pinyon Jay records (presence or absence!) via the GBBO Survey1,2,3 form. For more info see: <https://pinyon-jay-community-science-gbbo.hub.arcgis.com/pages/surveys>







# BIRDING STRATEGIES

## Strategies for Big Day Birding

There are endless strategies for Big Days, and it depends largely on your situation. In a general sense, the most effective Big Days will visit a variety of habitats in a variety of locations. Using your local knowledge can add to your efficiency, for example by thinking of reliable locations for less common species, like owls or raptors, you can save time searching. Here are a few tips:

- ✓ Check the eBird rare bird alerts to boost your total with uncommon species
- ✓ Check with your friends and neighbors for any notable sightings
- ✓ Do your homework- figure out where you have a chance to see certain birds, and how long it is going to take to see them
- ✓ Scout ahead of time. Is your reliable Barn Owl *really* that reliable? Consider time of day, check your spots at the time you plan to be there on the Big Day, to make sure you can still find your target in the afternoon!
- ✓ Balance all the birds you *could* see with all the traveling that you *will do* even if you don't add the species to your list.

## Strategies for Backyard Birding

Whether you live in a house, an apartment, or are adopting a local park as your “yard” for the duration of the competition, here are a few tips to help maximize your yard bird list:

- ✓ Check your “yard” or visit your adopted yard at various times of day (don't just check at noon every day and miss your night owls and early birds).
- ✓ Get up early to check the feeders and keep them stocked.
- ✓ Make sure water features aren't frozen over or empty.
- ✓ Be on your A-game for chasing those wandering cats away.

**Please review the official birding rules in this welcome packet before starting your Bird-a-thon.**





# OFFICIAL BIRDING RULES

## 1. Counting

**A.** Count only full species as indicated by the current ABA Checklist and Supplements.

**B.** Birds must be conclusively identified by sight or sound. Use common sense: if in doubt about the bird's identity, don't count it. Identification may be confirmed after the original observation if that identification is based solely on field notes made while the bird was living and unrestrained. A bird identified to one of a species group (i.e., scaup, small alcid, Western/Semipalmated Sandpiper, Common/Arctic Tern) may be counted as a species if no other in that group is counted.

**C.** An introduced species may be counted if its status in the Count area meets the criteria for the ABA Checklist.

**D.** Birds counted must be alive, wild, and unrestrained. In general, GBBO discourages the use of playback, and anything that interferes with natural behavior, or could cause birds undue stress. However, birds attracted to tape recorders (in compliance with the ABA Code of Birding Ethics) or feeders may be counted, if you must. Injured birds may be counted if wild and unrestrained. Eggs do not count as birds.

## 2. Time

**A.** All Big Day Birders' (including Green/Carbon Conscious Big Day Birders) counting must be within a single 24-hour period i.e., 12 am-12 am, 3 pm-3 pm, etc. Official ABA rules specify that counts be completed within a single calendar day, which Nevada Bird-a-thon participants are welcome to do. However, per Nevada Bird-a-thon rules, participants may begin their count at any time, with the start time defining the 24-hour period.

**B.** The compiler may designate a time-out for gas, food, rest, or separate motorized travel. A bird first seen or heard during a time-out may not be counted, nor may the same individual be counted if located during regular counting time.

**3. Area** – Must be within the state of Nevada.





**A.** Teams registered as Big Day birders may travel wherever they can within the state within a 24-hour period.

**B.** Please be respectful of private land, no trespassing will be tolerated.

**C.** Respect all posted rules and signs at any facilities you visit during your Bird-a-thon.

**D.** Teams registered as Backyard birders may only count birds they see or hear from their yard, during the duration of the event.

#### **4. Travel**

**A.** Big Day Birders' travel may be by any means, provided that all participants remain within direct voice-contact distance during all travel except timeouts.

#### **5. Participants**

**A.** Teams will consist of no more than 5 individuals.

**B.** Nonparticipating companions may accompany the team and may record or may drive the vehicle. A companion may not aid in identification of, nor in any way indicate to the participants the presence of any bird not previously identified by every participant.

**C.** You may only participate on 2 teams if those teams are competing in different prize categories, i.e you can be on a Backyard team and a Big Day team, but not 2 Big Day teams or 2 Backyard teams.

#### **6. Conduct**

Each participant must:

**A.** remain within direct voice-contact distance of all other participants at all times, except during time-outs.

**B.** make every reasonable effort to identify personally and to help other team members identify every species counted by the team.

**C.** count only birds personally and unquestionably identified.

**D.** review the Big Day Count Rules before the start of the Count.

**8. Ethics** – Each participant should strive to maintain proper birding ethics at all times.

